

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 11-12, 15-16, and 21-22 are presently active in this case, Claims 11-12, 15-16, and 21-22 having been amended by the present amendment, and Claims 1-10, 13-14, and 17-20 having previously been canceled.

In the outstanding Official Action, inconsistencies in the specification were noted; Claims 11-12, 15-16, and 21-22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the enablement requirement; Claims 11-12, 15-16, and 21-22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention; and Claims 11-12, 15-16, and 21-22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Lennon et al. (US Pub. No. 2003/0018607, hereinafter called "Lennon").

In response to the identification of inconsistency in Applicants' specification, the specification has been amended at page 15 to eliminate the noted inconsistencies. No new matter has been added.

In view of the several grounds for rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, the claims have been amended to clarify the claimed invention, consistent with the original disclosure. By way of non-limiting example, corresponding elements in the specification relative to the claimed features are as follows:

1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th memories: 101, 102, 104, 110

"label obtaining unit": 103

"input unit": 105

"acquiring unit": 111

"extracting unit";	111
"first retrieval unit":	108
"second retrieval unit":	108
"output unit:"	109

These elements are described in detail in the specification, as discussed in context hereinafter. Accordingly, no new matter is believed to have been added by the present amendment.

To assist in an understanding of the present invention, various aspects of the Applicants' invention are next described, with references to specific passages in the specification being noted.

Explanation of "Commodity Information Data"

(1) The specification, page 10, lines 7-16 describes the following.

The commodity information data is a structured data described in XML.

The commodity information data includes one or more elements. Each of the elements includes an element name (tag or tag name) and an element value.

(2) The commodity information data shown in FIG. 2 includes an element having an element name of "<Commodity information>". The element includes elements having element names of "<Shop name>" and "<Data>". Further, the element <Data> includes elements having element names of "<Commodity name>", "<Retail price>", "<Size>" and "<Operating time>". In the structured data such as XML, a hierarchical structure or a partial hierarchical structure composed of a plurality of elements, as in this case, is expressed in a tree structure as shown below. This tree structure is called "tree" or "subtree".

<Commodity information>

-<Shop name>

- <Data>
- <Commodity name>
- <Retail price>
- <Size>
- <Operating time>

In the structured data shown in FIG. 2, the subtree below the tag <Commodity information> corresponds to the portion from <Commodity information> to </Commodity information>. The subtree below the tag <Data> corresponds to portion 211 from <Data> to </Data>. (See the specification, page 12, lines 8-15.)

Explanations of Label, Element Name, and Element Value

The specification, page 2, line 21 to page 3, line 5 states, "a tag used to store a commodity price can be either a <PRICE> tag or <kakaku ("kakaku" means "price" in Japanese)> tag or can be <TAG1>. In this way, the tag name can be freely set. Hence, a tag name that represents the attribute of data like <PRICE> can be used, or a tag name that does not represent the attribute of data like <TAG1> can be used. In the latter case, the user cannot determine a tag that describes a commodity price."

Also, the specification, page 35, lines 11-22 states, "Preferably, a pattern (a character string pattern) which is determined for each type (or category) of an element value, and represents the types and arrangement of characters of a character string that belongs to that type of the element value is stored in advance in association with a label corresponding to the type. Upon estimating the type of an element value of an element of each structured data, the types and arrangement of characters of a character string as the element value of that element

are compared with the pre-stored patterns, and a label corresponding to a pattern which matches the element value is obtained."

An element name of an element in a structured data can be freely set. Accordingly, even when an element name of an element in one structured data is <PRICE> and that of an element in another structured data is <TAG1>, there is a case where the element values of both of the elements are "1,000 yen" indicating a price.

The type of an element value can be price, time, length, capacity, frequency or the like, as described in the specification, page 13, line 11 to page 14, line 21 and FIG. 6, etc. The name of the type for distinguishing each of these types is a label.

Further, an element- value- pattern for the label expresses or represents the arrangement of characters of a character string that belongs to the type.

Eventually, in Applicants' disclosed invention, as described in the specification, page 13, lines 11-16, a second memory (102) stores (a) a label "price", corresponding to one of types "price" of the element value and indicating a name of the one of the types, and (b) an element- value- pattern for the label "price". The element- value- pattern expresses a character string which belong to the one of the types corresponding to the label "price", for example, characters "yen" immediately after a string of one or more numerals and commas (,) like "1000 yen" and "1,000 yen".

Then, since the element value "1,000 yen" of the element having the element name <TAG1> is the same as the above element- value- pattern, the data set including the element name <TAG1> and the above label "price" is obtained.

Likewise, since the element value "1,000 yen" of the element having the element name <PRICE> is the same as the above element- value- pattern, the data set including the element name <PRICE> and the above label "price" is obtained.

As a result, it can be determined that the element having the element name <TAG1> in one structured data and the element having the element name <PRICE> in another structured data include the element values indicating the same "price", although their element names differ.

In the present invention, with the above processing, even though element names are different, the elements having the same arrangement of the characters of the element value, i.e. having the same type of element value, are provided with the same label.

Explanation of Type of Element Value

The type of an element value can be price, time, length, capacity, frequency or the like, as described in the specification, page 13, line 11 to page 14, line 21 and FIG. 6, etc. The name of the type for distinguishing each of these types is a label. For example, specific examples of "type" are described in the specification, page 13, line 11 to page 14, line 21 and FIG. 6, etc., such as price, time, length, capacity and frequency.

Claims 11, 12, 15, 16, 21 and 22

Claim 11 expresses the case where a search request includes a label and a keyword. Claim 12 expresses the case where a search request is expressed in natural language and includes a plurality of words. Claim 15 is an apparatus claim corresponding to claim 11. Claim 16 is an apparatus claim corresponding to claim 12.

In Amended Claim 16, the "first acquiring unit" and "second acquiring unit" in original Claim 16 are amended as a "label obtaining unit". The "label obtaining unit" corresponds to a "first estimating unit" (e.g., 103). The "third acquiring unit" in original Claim 16 is amended as an "acquiring unit". The "acquiring unit" corresponds to a "second

estimating unit" (e.g., 111). The "fourth memory" corresponds to a "second estimation knowledge storing unit" (e.g., 110). The "extracting unit" corresponds to a "second estimating unit" (e.g., 111). The "first retrieval unit" and "second retrieval unit" correspond to a "retrieval unit" (e.g., 108).

Anticipation Rejection of Claims 11, 12, 15, 16, 21 and 22 based on Lennon

As explained above, even though element names are different, the elements having the same arrangement of the characters of the element value, i.e. having the same type of element value, are provided with the same label. As a result, even though element names are different, it is easy to retrieve the elements having "price" as element values.

In Applicants' view, Lennon does not disclose any feature corresponding to:

"storing, in a second memory, (a) a plurality of labels corresponding to a plurality of types of the element value respectively, each of the labels indicating a name one of the types, and (b) one or more element- value- patterns for each label of the labels, each of the element- value- patterns expressing an arrangement of characters of a character string which belongs to one of the types corresponding to the label" (supported by the specification, page 13, line 1 to page 14, line 21, and page 35, lines 11-22, etc.); or

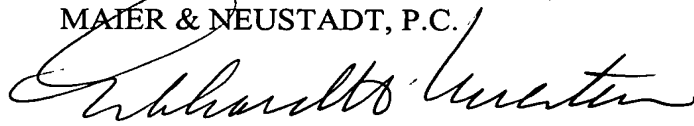
"comparing the element value of each element of the elements with the element- value- patterns for each of the labels stored in the second memory, to obtain a plurality of data sets each including (a) the element name of the element and (b) one of the labels whose corresponding element- value- pattern matches the arrangement of the characters of the element value of the element" (supported by the specification, page 15, line 23 to page 16, line 15, and page 17, lines 1-5, etc.).

Accordingly, in view of the present amendment and in light of the above explanation, it is respectfully submitted that the amended claims patentably define over Lennon.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the above comments, no further issues are believed to be outstanding, and the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.



Eckhard H. Kuesters
Attorney of Record
Registration No. 28,870

Customer Number
22850

Tel: (703) 413-3000
Fax: (703) 413 -2220
(OSMMN 06/04)

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